The World of Foreign Books

German Books.

Surveyed by LUDWIG LEWISOHN.

SUPERFICIALLY a quite monotonous story can be told about every book market in the world and I could describe recent publishing and literary events in Germany in the terms of the publisher's "blurb" and the literary "note." It would sound somewhat as follows: The veteran novelist Gabriele Reuter, who made an international reputation with her remarkable feminist novel, "A Gentleman's Daughter," has just issued her very profound and searching autobiography, "From Childhood to Humanity," which is not only a fascinating story but a first rate contribution to the history of the emancipation of woman. Among other of the established writers who have brought out new books are Herbert Eulenberg, whose novel, "Hallway House," is also autobiographical, and those popular and by no means contemptible concocters of horror and mystery stories—the most genuine disciples of Poe in the world—Hans Heinz Ewers and Gustav Meyrink, whose new volumes are appropriately and respectively called "Nightmare" and "The White Dominican." In this way one might go on, adding that the very prolific Georg Kaiser is about to reveal another of his expressionistic plays and that that astonishing poet, Franz Werfel, continues his experiments in the lyrical and philosophical drama with "The Goatgod's Song."

Germany Seeking New Concepts.

In Germany, both before and since the war, the breakdown of dogmatic and traditional religion has been more complete than probably anywhere else. This process was accomplished, however, without the decrease or even the thinning out of the specifically religious emotions. It seemed necessary to the Germans, then, to find new concepts and spiritual realities to which these emotions could cling. That is why we witness in Germany the intensive cult of its great thinkers and poets—of Novalis, Hebbel, Nietzsche, Goethe. But even these cults did not suffice. New voices were needed to interpret on a neo-religious basis the experiences of mankind amid the tragic intricacies of the immddiate present. One such voice is that of Eduard Keyserling, of whose "Travel Diary of a Philosopher" a good deal has already been said and written in America; another voice is the voice of Leopold Ziegler, whose latest book, "The Eternal Buddho," has just appeared.

The Spirit of Ziegler.

I confidently look forward to a time when the ideas of Ziegler will be taught in our schools and colleges and his books or at least books about him will be in every hand. His is the most commanding philosophical message since Bergson's. And it is infinitely more imaginative, human, warm and inspiring. Bergson is an amazingly acute and fresh thinker. Ziegler is a thinker, too. Primarily he is a seeker after God. In his great work, "The Transformation of the Gods," he deals with the various methods by which man, with that strange passion of his, has sought to make the world divine. And these methods have always consisted in the interposition between man and the universe of some man-made and manlike deity. We can do that no more. And so Ziegler essays the staggering task of remolding the universe into divinity without the old, discredited makeshifts. I cannot here enter upon his reasons or his visions. But "The Transformation of the Gods" and "The Eternal Buddho" are works that are—to use a much misused word—epoch making. A few years from now and perhaps papers will be read before women's clubs on the philosophy of Leopold Ziegler. Then my making him a part of the literary news of the moment will be justified.

Jacob Wassermann.

The spirit of Ziegler, if neither his precise method nor ideas, is the dominant spirit in German letters today. The distinguished novelist, Jacob Wassermann, whose intense work, "The World's Illusion," has had such an astonishing American success, has just gathered in a slim but brimming volume the essays he has written within the past few years. He calls his volume "Imaginary Bridges." What are these bridges? They are to be paths to new conceptions of the nature of possessions, of love, of literature. Wassermann is fond of using the word "myth" as a symbol for the divine life of mankind, the spiritualization of life and love, art and society through the creative force of the mind. He will not allow that force to be possessed by the mere scientist, the mere man of letters. He sees the creative mind as the synthetic and prophetic mind that does not merely observe and report and embellish but that makes its visions into realities which it substitutes for the godless and destructive civilization we have built. Like Shaw in "Mehtuselah," Wassermann proclaims the power of man's creative will. But he is not concerned with a will toward a long life or a life of thought, but with a will toward divine life in which love shall recreate not only society but the universe itself.

The Book of Braun.

The atmosphere of the entire literary and psychical situation in Germany is best illustrated by one of the most beautiful and moving books in all literature. "Otto Braun: The Literary Remains of a Youth." Otto Braun, the son of the well known feminist and socialist, Lily Braun and Dr. Heinrich Braun, was born in June 1897 and killed on the western front in April, 1918. The memorial volume consists of extracts from Braun's diaries and letters, his poems and the fragment of a play in verse. It is one of those precious documents of glory and genius unfulfilled either through the tyranny of death or life like the books of Chatterton or Maurice de Guerin. What is characteristic of his age and country about this marvelous boy is that union of extraordinary learning with the desire to synthesize and create the world anew through blending of beauty and thought, through a creative yearning for a new religion in the deepest sense of the word, through an identification of all things with a revelation which the will and the wisdom of man must bring forth.

Soviets and Zionists.

The most recent German book of first rate importance is different from these others only in method and appearance. The ultimate spirit of it is the same. A year ago the well known writer and publicist Arthur Holitscher went to Moscow and brought back his report of the Soviets, which was the profoundest and most instructive yet written. And it was so because Holitscher, too, is a seeker after salvation. He went to Russia to discover whether the experiment in revolution there had any relation to the possible saving of mankind. I shall not dwell here on the nature of his report. The interest it had was in its purpose and viewpoint. This year Holitscher went to the Holy Land, and the volume just issued is called "A Trip Through Jewish Palestine." It sticks to facts and figures closely enough. But it is also a poetic interpretation of the Zionist movement. It goes to the sources of it not only in the hearts of Jewry, but in the nature of the debacle that has overtaken European civilization. It tells the tales of the wanderers who go from the schools and universities of Eastern Europe to break stones on the roads of Palestine in order to save their souls. It tells, too, how many of these young men and women are unbelievers and have no theological attachment toward either the land or the faith of their ancestors, but how their work and their wandering, too, is the work and the wandering of pilgrims who desire to create a new divine life out of their efforts and their thoughts.

Hauptmann at Sixty.

American readers will doubtless be interested finally in the recent activities of the one German man of letters whose name is universally known. That man is, of course, Gerhart Hauptmann. Next fall he will celebrate his sixtieth birthday and already the papers and magazines are full of reminiscences and of critical estimates of his career, and a new biography of the great dramatist is being prepared for fall publication by the well known critic Arthur Eloesser.

It cannot be said that Hauptmann's recent works will contribute materially to his fame. The strain of morbidness that began to show in such plays as "Charlemange's Hostage" and "Gabriel Schilling's Flight" appears in somewhat exaggerated form in "A Ballad of Winter." In this play the projection of the icy cruelty of the Swedish winter is very powerful. But the story itself has some of the harshness and bloodiness that we find among the minor contemporaries of Shakespeare.

His other two quite recent plays, "Indipohdi" and "The White Savior," are far more agreeable and satisfying. But Hauptmann's greatest quality has always been in the genuineness of his treatment of life. And in these new plays there is a quality of remoteness that makes them seem almost fantastic. In both, to be sure, Hauptmann is trying to say something of very immediate importance to the modern world, but his message is obscured by his medium. In "The White Savior," for instance, he deals with the conquest of Mexico. In the annals and traditions of the Mexican religion there is a story that white messengers from the gods will come in time to save mankind. Montezuma has perfect faith in the coming of these white saviors. So when his ministers and generals tell him that white men have landed, slaying and plundering, he will not believe them, he urges non-resistance, he believes that the forerunners of the white savior have come. Meanwhile the priests with the Spanish forces urge Cortez and his men in the name of their white savior not to spare the heathen, whose country must be brought under the banners of Spain and Christ. Thus the believers in one Savior betray and kill and enslave the believers in another, and they who follow the teachings that alone can save the soul are visited, for that very reason, with destruction and death. Both the power and truth and the pessimism of that action are obvious. The trouble is that Hauptmann wrote the play in verse, and not in blank verse, but in the unrhymed trochaics familiar to us from "Hiawatha." And both triviality and padding seem inseparable from that form of verse.

Hauptmann's latest publication is a tribute to the classic tradition such as every German, and for that matter every Scandinavian, poet seems to think it his duty to pay sooner or later. It is a pastoral narative and descriptive poem called "Anna." Like Goethe's "Herman and Dorothea" and Longfellow's "Evangeline," which is a product of the same tradition and custom, "Anna" is written in hexameters. It contains some agreeable vignettes of the Silesian rural life which Hauptmann knows so well. But one cannot help wishing that here, too, he had clung to the form of which he is the undisputed master and had rather given us another "Drayman Henschel," or another "Weavers."

NEW BOOKS

Continued from Preceding Page.

THE SCRIPTORES HISTORIAE AUGUSTAE—With an English translation by David Magie. In three volumes, of which this is the first.

PHILOSTATUS AND EUNAPIUS: THE LIVES OF THE SOPHISTS—With an English translation by Wilmer Cave Wright. The above volumes are part of the "Loeb Classical Library" and are published by G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Essays and Sketches.

READERS AND WRITERS—By A. R. Orage.

South America.

INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL SOUTH AMERICA—By Annie S. Peck. Discusses the cities and ports, transportation systems, physical characteristics and natural resources, agricultural, mineral, stock raising and forestry of South American countries. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Economics.

PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW ECONOMICS—By Lionel D. Edie. In "Crowell's Social Science Series," edited by Seba Eldridge. Thomas Y. Crowell Company.

Spiritualism.

MIND'S SILENT PARTNER: THE HIGH COUNSELOR WITHIN—By James Porter Mills. Edward J. Clode.

Adventure.

MOUNTED JUSTICE—By Katharine Mayo. True stories of the Pennsylvania State Police. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Miscellaneous.

THE VALUE OF GOOD MANNERS—By Margaret Emerson Bailey. Rules of etiquette and good manners in their application to daily life and business. Doubleday, Page and Co.

SEX AND COMMON SENSE—By A. Maude Royden. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

WOMAN'S LIFE IN COLONIAL DAYS—By Carl Holliday. Boston: The Cornhill Publishing Company.

BILL JOHNSTON'S JOY-BOOK—Edited by William T. Johnston. Contains 2,002 jokes classified under subject headings. Cincinnati: Stewart Kidd Company.

LLOYD GEORGE BY MR. PUNCH—With an introduction by W. Algernon Locker. Drawings that have appeared in *Punch* and of which Mr. Lloyd George was the subject. Frederick A. Stokes Company.